

Japan Christian Activity News

PUBLISHED

BY NCC J

Editor:

Shoji Tsutomu

ISSN: 0021-4353

#610

June 25, 1984

PRAYER FOR OUR TIMES

*We raise our eyes in prayer
through the bars, darkly*

*Together with a thousand prisoners
in their cells
and with many more thousands
in the larger prison
of our country*

*We pray for freedom
and even more urgently, for life.*

*As nameless executioners salvage
those whom they used to merely torture and detain
and both children and parents
slowly but surely die
of sickness that has many names
and only one name.*

*We ask for faith
to see that death and prison are not forever
that life and freedom will prevail.*

*We ask for faith
to celebrate even while we mourn
knowing that death and prison
are already signs of a people's struggle
for freedom and life.*

*We raise our voices in prayer
through the bars, boldly
believing that there will be an answer
as our people awaken.*

Amen.

For letters of support to
Fr. Ed and other detainees,
write: Task Force Detainees
of the Philippines
214 N. Domingo St.
San Juan, Manila, Phil.

Ed de la Torre
April 1984
Bago Bantay Detention Camp
Philippines



JUL 5 1984



NATIONAL CHRISTIAN COUNCIL Room 24, 2-3-18 Nishiwaseda, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 160 Japan

NOTE: Permission to reprint is granted to all media provided that credit is given and a copy is sent to the editors.

EMERGENCY CHRISTIAN MEETING AGAINST TOMAHAWK MISSILE

For the second time this spring, Protestants and Catholics gathered in Yokosuka, home of the U.S. Naval 7th Fleet, June 10, in an urgent Pentagon protest against the deployment of the U.S. Tomahawk cruise missiles aboard U.S. Navy ships. Although the U.S. House of Representatives recently voted against the June deployment, the arrival is expected to be imminent. The event was co-sponsored by Protestant and Catholic groups in Kanagawa prefecture and included speeches of protest by both religious groups, information sharing, and small group discussions. Following the meeting was a peaceful march through the streets of Yokosuka where some 40 protestors paused in front of the Naval Fleet Headquarters to deliver opposition messages.

One speaker at the meeting, who represented a Yokosuka citizens' group, said that the capability of destruction of a Tomahawk missile is equal to 15 times that of the bomb dropped on Hiroshima. The ramifications of pointing the weapon toward the Soviet Union and North Korea are that Japan is put on the front line, with Western Europe, of nuclear confrontation.

Rev. SHOJI Tsutomu, General Secretary of NCCJ, spoke on the blasphemous nature of the arms race. Realizing that all of humanity is created in the image of God, the threat of destroying that creation through the use of nuclear arms is not only a serious crime, but the greatest blasphemy against God. The act of committing nuclear war is an unconceivable horror, yet humanity persistently threatens to do just that. Rev. Shoji stressed that if we are to be true to the Gospel, we must, in loving our neighbors in Japan and across the waters in all directions, take the risk of loving our "enemies." Only by initiating disarmament will we be able to bring about a lasting peace.

Mr. OKAMURA Masashi, Chair of the Catholic Council on Justice and Peace

of the Yokohama Diocese (Kanagawa Prefecture) spoke on the importance of breaking down the walls that divide us. Prof. ISHITANI Susumu, Chair of the NCCJ Peace Committee stressed the necessity of training ourselves in nonviolence, especially in light of growing tendencies of the police forces to use aggressive measures to control demonstrations of public protest.



OFFERING AIDS LANGUAGE PROGRAM

A "Prayer for Christian Unity," ecumenical service was held at Ueno Catholic Church on June 3. About 250 people from five Protestant and Catholic Churches attended the service. Various churches in Tokyo's Ueno district prepared for this day for more than six months through which the fellowship between the churches deepened. The offering from the service was dedicated to a Japanese language program for first generation Korean mothers in Japan which is held at the Nishi Ari Korean Christian Church in Japan. This was the first ecumenical meeting in the district and the group has decided to establish it as an annual event.

NOW AVAILABLE! TOWARD A PHILOSOPHY OF FEMINISM AND RELIGION, Edited by The Feminist Religion Study Group, Ohbun-Kikaku Publishing Co., Osaka, Japan, 1984, 69pp., ¥500, (plus ¥200 postage for mail orders.)

The full report of the February Christian/Buddhist Women's Seminar (see #607 March JCAN) is now available. Read the major addresses of the meeting as well as small group discussion strategy notes.

VOICES OF OKINAWANS: REFLECTIONS ON A RECENT VISIT

By SHOJI Tsutomu

As a participant in the CCA Education Sub-regional Consultation in Okinawa May 2-8, I visited the Peace Memorial Park in Mabuni Hill where thousands of soldiers and civilians died in that narrow space of time in Okinawa's June 1945 battle. There we entered the Peace Prayer Museum. The following is a reflection on that trip.

When I went to Peace Prayer Museum for the first time five years ago, I was so completely overwhelmed with the voices of many Abels "crying from the ground" (Gen. 4:10). Their voices surrounded me. They cried, appealed to me and interceded for me. They told me how they loved their families--their children, mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters, grandparents, uncles and aunts, and friends. They told me how they wished to live peaceful lives together and how painful it was to be thrown into that cruel battle. They appealed to me and urged me to work for peace. I did not feel accused by the voices, rather they prayed to God for me. They interceded for me to God, praying for my sins of laziness, insensitivity and self-centeredness which are the ingredients of war.

This visit was my third to Okinawa, and the voices were the same as I had heard before. They were those who died as victims in the battle. This is a fact that we cannot evade. But they are not just the dead. This is also an undeniable reality. They live with us and appeal to us. I do not think this is a sort of overly emotional sentimentalism. In Japan, as in many countries of Asia, Buddhists and people of other religions have a clear sense of living together with those who have passed away. We should have much to learn from this concept.

The victims of war urge us to work for peace. They will never stop appealing to us until the Kingdom of God comes. They are so loving that though many were not "Christians,"

their cries call to our God in intercession. In this way, we see Jesus standing in the midst of them, being crucified on our behalf. "You have... come to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel" (Hebrews 12:22-24).

I don't think I'm romanticizing or using the dead for our purposes. I am not saying that their deaths were necessary for us as a means of knowing the price of peace. If I said so, it would be inhuman. What I mean is that the cries and appeals of the victims who reveal their love and pain must prevent us from waging war.

During the trip, the consultation participants also visited Ie Island off the northern tip of the main island. There we met Mr. Shoko Ahagon, an 82 year-old Christian who has long been a leader of the anti-U.S. base farmers' protest on the island. I was very impressed with his sense of confidence as well as his gentle yet powerful spirit. Ahagon-san told us that he spends five minutes every day praying, just long enough to join in communion with those saints who have gone before him in peacemaking, and those at work in the world now. In his conversation with those peacemakers of long ago, for that is what he has with them, he finds comfort and inspiration. When Ahagon-san is suffering from the torment of military persecution in his efforts to confront those powers on the U.S. base, and becomes angry, Jesus appears to him saying, "Look, I prayed on the cross for those who persecuted me. You should do the same" (Lk. 23:33-34.)

When Ahagon-san is tired of the endless sitting at the gates of the military base in order to maintain a peaceful protest and presence there, Gautama Buddha appears to him and says, "Don't be discouraged. I sat for six years in order to find my own peace. Be reassured."

And when Ahagon-san's body is in pain from two days of fasting in protest of the U.S. military base presence on the island, Mahatma Gandhi appears to him
(continued next page)

(OKINAWAN VOICES, cont'd.)

saying, "I persevered fasting for forty days. Be patient."

Ahagon-san's struggle is not just an event which happens by chance on the edge of a small Okinawan island. His communion is with the witnesses of truth spanning over 5000 years of history and stretching around the globe. His witness therefore, is a universal call to peace.

His struggle further discloses how we, in Japan, are short-sighted in our daily lives; we are caught up in our consumeristic values and live only for the material pleasures of the moment, forgetting to live in the truth. I was converted there again on Ie Island, called to live in the truth and witness to the span of history and global struggle for peace.

#

500,000 SIGNATURES BY CHRISTMAS: GOAL OF ANTI-FINGERPRINTING CAMPAIGN

More than 1000 signatures were gathered on Pentacost Sunday, June 10, in a joint Korean Christian Church in Japan and United Church of Christ drive to support changing the fingerprinting requirement for Alien Registration in Japan.

The campaign launched in Tokyo and Osaka with 40-50 volunteers at each site will continue every month until Christmas in an effort to collect 500,000 signatures.



Rev. NAKAJIMA and Rev. KIM at the Tokyo Sukiabashi signature collecting site.

Rev. HONG Yong Kee, Moderator of KCCJ and Rev. USHIROKU Toshio, Moderator of UCC led the signature collecting at Osaka Uemda Station from 3-5 p.m. while Rev. KIM Kun Shik, General Secretary of KCC and Rev. NAKAJIMA Masaaki, General Secretary of UCC led the same action at Sukiabashi, Tokyo, from 3-6 p.m.

The petitions have also been circulated within the churches of the two denominations.

#

FRIENDS' SCHOOL CANCELS HIROSHIMA TRIPS

The Tokyo Friends Girls' School, a Quaker based school with a history of peace education and concerns, recently discontinued its annual field trips to Hiroshima in a wave of administrative changes which included the demotion of seven teachers.

Ms. Yoshiko Tanaka, head of the teachers union since its formation in June 1983, was taken from her positions as head of the Bible department and of the instruction department in October 1983. Ms. Tanaka, an alumnus of Friends School and former secretary-general of the Japan Fellowship of Reconciliation, continues to teach her own classes at the school. The six other teachers taken from their homeroom assignments have not been able to continue to be homeroom teachers or even assistant homeroom teachers, despite their wishes. However, there are still six union members who continue to serve homeroom assignments.

Ms. Sumie Ikeya, a Friends' School teacher, reports that the school headmaster apparently has no intention of resuming the study trips to Hiroshima, though "over 50% of the teachers support it; that is, all the union members plus some non-union members."

In addition, a group of alumni are working to appeal the decision by gathering written requests of former students to send to the school.

EDITORIAL STAFF: Aiko CARTER, Cherie EMERY, Claudia GENUNG, KANZAKI Yuji.

NUCLEARIZATION OF THE PHILIPPINES

Nuclearization and militarization go together," emphasized Sister Aida Velasquez in a lecture sponsored by the NCCJ on May 31. "In the Philippines, the nuclear power plant which will service the U.S. bases must go," Sister Aida told a group of 60 people at the Shinsei Kaikan Building in Tokyo. She was on her way home to the Philippines from a meeting of the Pacific Concerns Resource Center Steering Committee in New York, and spent her brief time in Japan discussing issues which related to the nuclear power plants built and exported by the U.S. For example, the Bataan Power Plant in the Philippines was able to be built there rather than in the U.S. because of the lax safeguards there. The nuclear conflict is intensified by the Subic Naval Base which is the largest base outside of the U.S., and Clark Field Air Base. Both of these bases are sovereignties of the U.S. and along with Bataan Power Plant are reflections of the mis-administration of Marcos. "It is an example of bad economic policies" pointed out the Catholic Bishops' letter to Marcos in 1983. "The above factors have contributed to the present Philippines," said Sister Aida, "and this exploitation continues despite protest because Marcos gets enough military support from the U.S. which promotes his power." Of course, in return of this support, the U.S. is ensured of use of the U.S. bases.

The Filipinos are questioning the role of the U.S. bases since their presence is unconstitutional. Sister Aida said that it is like a coin: one side is independence and self-determination; the other side is nuclearization and militarization. In case of war, the bases in the Philippines will be the first target of attack. This concerns Japan because Japan has significant oil interests involved, bringing a certainty to their participation in any war of the Pacific. This also shows why the campaign against the deployment of the Tomahawk cruise missiles is important. Sister Aida stressed that the significance of

such a campaign must be understood by the Japanese in terms of survival.

NCCJ and the Catholic Council for Justice and Peace are encouraging churches to help people protest nuclearization. It is important for all of us to grasp why there is nuclear build-up. The U.S. and Japan's growing interest in South East Asia big businesses have to be protected. Therefore, this seems to be a major factor in militarization and an increase in the military budget. If there are no big businesses to protect, then there is no need for militarization.

Sister Aida said that there has to be a time to question the concept of development which promotes death over life. An example given by Sister Aida was to look around the world and see if science and technology have helped or been used to exploit so-called "developing nations." Sister Aida spoke on the importance of searching for alternatives. "I suggest that Japan look more in depth at what their response is to the present situation and see the prominent issues such as the promotion of nuclear power, and the build-up and dumping of nuclear waste. The present need for people to reflect on these issues underscores the importance of the peace movements." Disarmament campaigns and peace movements impose a challenge to consumers to show how this encourages military build-up. "If you see the link between consumerism and military build-up, would you remain unconcerned?" Sister Aida asked the attentive audience. Militarism is often made acceptable and even attractive, she said, "and there is active participation and cooperation in the build-up."

Asked by the audience what could be done to check militarization, Sister Aida responded that "by dwelling on the suffering imposed on people, the Japanese government can be criticized and even denounced, if necessary." The evening ended with prayers that links between people would be made so that the work for peace and justice "would slowly transform our global village."

By Claudia Genung

BOOK REVIEW

KAIHOENO KAKEHASHI (Bridge to Liberation), Louis Grier, Nihon Kirisuto Kyodan Publishing Co., 1984, 230 pp., ¥1,300. (In Japanese only).

By any standard of evaluation, my list of outstanding postwar Japan missionaries is headed by Louis Grier. In fact, he stands apart from the others, in a class by himself. His untimely death was a shock and a great loss to the Christian mission in Japan. I remember, as if it were yesterday, the strong grip of his one good hand as he lay half-paralyzed on his hospital bed in Yodogawa Christian Hospital in Osaka a few days before he died. He was strong in faith as well, and full of good cheer, as he shared his plans for a family reunion in the fall.

That was two years ago. Now we have his posthumously published book, Kaihoeno Kakehashi, to bring back with warmth and vigor the hopes and fears and joys and struggles and ideas of the Louis Grier of Wakayama evangelism and Buraku liberation. I am very happy that the Kyodan has published this collection of Grier Senkyoshi's sermons and writings related to the issue of Buraku discrimination. The name of the book comes from a well-known Japanese book entitled, "The River Without Any Bridge."

In the first chapter, Grier's last public address, the reader is introduced to the process by which he moved rather naturally into an unusual ministry among Japan's largest group of discrimination victims from his earlier experience in the United States in the struggle for Black liberation and equality in white America. It was partly this earlier experience that led him to see his 34 years in Japan as the struggle of an outsider trying to get inside. He brought to Japan the insight of the Black liberation movement that the real problem of discrimination is on the side of the discriminator, in the attitude of prejudice, rather than on the side of the victims. He saw the bridge to liberation as starting from identification with the oppres-

sed, sharing the experience of discrimination. To walk beside the victims of our oppressing society is the first step toward the reform of the society itself, (p.23). This means standing on the other side of the bridgeless river (p. 24). And this is what Grier did, living in a discriminated-against community, and establishing a church to serve its needs. When the Kyodan finally established its Buraku Liberation Center in 1981, he was ready to be its associate director.

The recurrent theme in this book was central in Louis Grier's life quest. It is the identity and mission of the individual Christian and of the Christian community in a world of inequality and oppression. His approach is essentially Biblical. It wrestles with the "whys" and "hows" of prophetic witness and social change. It explores false security --in society and in the church-- and proclaims the transforming power of life in Christ. He is critical of "Bushi Kaikyū" theology that can ignore the oppressed, and supportive of a gospel message of liberation. A notable part of this book is his imaginative use of Paul's letter to the Galatians to cast light on the transculturalization of Christianity in Japan today, culminating in rewriting Galatians as a letter to the churches of Naniwa chiho, a sort of "Gospel for the mikaihosha (discriminated against)."

It is hoped that this small, but important book will be widely read in Japan. Its usefulness would be increased by publication in English to reach the outside world.

By Alden Matthews

In the true sense, liberation is freedom from discrimination. An intermediary is one who takes the role of bridging the oppressed, and though the oppressor may try to be good, discrimination does not go away. The true liberator seen in the Gospel stands with the oppressed and works among them.

Galatians 3:20

by Louis Grier; letter to the buraku people.

THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT SEEN THROUGH THE EYES OF A JAPANESE CHRISTIAN WOMAN

The United Church of Christ in Japan, of which I am a member, was formed in 1941, bringing together 34 different denominations of the time. It may be seen as a typical representation of the ecumenical effort, but for some concerned people the formation of the United Church raised some difficult problems. For them it was an important time when people began to see the hard issues facing the church.

The United Church was formed under Japan's imperial militarism with a policy of religious control. Japan was a mission land for the Western countries in the beginning, and yet already well on its way to Westernization. Some Japanese Christians hoped to unite the various churches established by foreign missions in order to free them of foreign domination and enable them to serve the people of the United Church in this land. However, the United Church of Christ was formed under the government's order and came under the authority of the government, made to adhere to national policies rather than to follow Christ. The polity of Japan at that time was to dominate other Asian countries and lead the way in the all-the-world-one-family principle. Therefore, when the United Church was formed under the directive of the government, the military invasion into other Asian countries was called "Holy War" and the church played a cooperative role in it. Along with Japan's military colonial policies, the church also absorbed into its organization the Korean and Taiwanese churches. It is a painful fact that the National Shinto Shrine worship was forced onto the Christians in those countries and many were martyred for their resistance.

It is interesting to note that women have had long standing access to ordination in the United Church of Christ (Kyodan), but this did not come about as a result of an organized protest or demand of women. Rather it was a means by which the church

sought to increase the ranks of the clergy to boost membership and secure status.

In light of this history, it is difficult to speak of the ecumenical spirit bringing about the formation of the Kyodan. It would be more accurate to say that it was an act of totalitarianism.

SOLIDARITY WITH OTHER ASIAN COUNTRIES

Immediately after World War II, Christians in Japan welcomed the boom of increasing church membership. People left in a spiritual vacuum from Japan's defeat in the war sought comfort and spiritual value from reading the Bible and going to church. This was a time when Japan was being reborn into a democratic state from imperial militarism. Many people were interested in the Christianity which came along with the U.S. Army Occupation, bringing to Japan Western Christian-based democracy. However, the Japanese churches repeated a mistake. The churches were deeply appreciative of the aid from both North American and Western European countries to restore themselves from war-time destruction. But the churches in Japan which had previously been submissive to Western imperialism again depended on the strength of the churches in advanced nations to prompt their growth. As a member of the United Church of Christ in Japan, I am greatly disturbed by the fact that the church took this course of dependency on Western countries. The head of the church is God alone, and should not be compromised by combining with idolatry of other leaders.

What the church should have done was to express its sincere repentance for the oppression and exploitation it imposed on other Asian countries, in the name of Jesus Christ. From that point, we would have been able to focus our vision on the future of the church.

In 1967, 22 years after World War II, the Kyodan issued a "Confession of War Responsibility During WWII," drafted by Rev. Suzuki Masahisa, then moderator of the Kyodan. This was an acknowledgment of the church's responsibility

(continued on page 8)

TEXTBOOK CONTROVERSY GOES TO COURT

Since 1980, the efforts of the Ministry of Education to change public school textbook accounts of history have intensified with the support of the Liberal Democratic Party. The Ministry of Education continues to apply pressure to the writers of social studies for the textbooks to change the history portions in accordance with the Ministry's line of thinking, threatening that the alternative would be that the books would not be published at all.

In 1982, many Asian countries protested the Ministry of Education's changes, to which the Ministry responded making superficial modifications, but persists in its account of Japan's invasions into other countries. In 1965, Professor IENAGA Saburo, of Tokyo Educational University, protested the control of the textbooks by the Ministry of Education, and fought in court for freedom of thought. The case advanced to the Supreme Court. Professor IENAGA continues to resist and speak out against government censorship. This year he took his case to court with emphasis on the following points:

- 1) The Ministry's position is that the Rape of Nanking was a disorganized act in a most confused and chaotic situation.

- 2) The word "invasion" used in writing has a negative connotation, and is banned by the Ministry of Education. "Advance" is used in its place.

- 3) References to the violence against women are also eliminated.

- 4) Information regarding special germ warfare is also omitted.

- 5) There is no reference to the Sino-Japanese war. #

(ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT cont'd. from p. 7)

toward other Asian churches, and an attempt to reform the nature of the church. But it fell short of making any concrete changes at that time. One example which indicates the unchangeable nature of the church was the controversial question related to the Christian pavilion at EXPO

1970. The issues raised over this event confronted the church in such a way as to halt functions of many Kyodan organizations and divide the church. Fourteen years later, the Kyodan has still not fully recovered from this crisis.

Christians in Asia are involved in a wide variety of human rights and liberation struggles. Where basic human rights suffer under dictatorial regimes, and poverty and starvation run rampant, there are committed Asian Christians working to affirm the dignity and human rights of the oppressed and effect change. Observing what is happening in Asia, we see Jesus at work with those who are most oppressed. Christians in Japan have much to learn from other Christians in Asia. It is our responsibility to overcome our frustrations and failures of the past and join with others in that one hope of peace through Jesus Christ.

ECUMENISM FROM A WOMAN'S PERSPECTIVE

Throughout church history, social participation of women has not been equal to that of men. Women have been oppressed and forced to live in the margin of society controlled by an elitist patriarchal structure. In the 100 years of Japan's Protestant history, the church has solidified its own sexist orientation with Japan's feudalistic traditions of women as second-class human beings, and has taught the submission of women in the church. We cannot allow this discrimination to continue either in the church or in society. Both men and women were created in God's image. Mutual in creation, men and women should be mutual in their relationships with one another as well. The real solution can only come through the restoration of mutuality and cooperation in the male-female relationship. As the Bible was written by males from a male perspective, I believe it should be read now from a woman's perspective and reinterpreted into one's own set of beliefs to stand on a liberated theology. It is our task to highlight the women's lives which have followed the footsteps of Jesus. It is my hope that the ecumenical movement would find its starting point in the struggles of people's lives, in an effort to base itself on human need and liberation.

By Rev. Iseko KAWASE